

Billy Sunday: the baseball evangelist

One of the greatest revival preachers America has ever known was Billy Sunday. (1863-1935),

The orphan boy who earned fame as major league baseball player before embarking upon his ministry as a revivalist. He was converted at the Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago in 1887, Billy Sunday immediately began witnessing for Christ. He gave up his successful baseball career to become a full time worker for the Chicago Ymca. For a time he traveled with evangelist J. Wilbut Chapman. When Chapman gave up evangelism on his own. In almost 40 years of preaching, Billy Sunday, who was ordained by the Presbyterian Church, spoke face to face, without a public address system, television, or radio, to an estimated 100 million people. Wherever he went, large tabernacles were built to hold the crowds that came to hear him preach. To deaden sound, the floor was covered with sawdust. Hundreds walked the "Sawdust Trail" each night to accept Christ a Savior. Campaigns lasted for months, with Billy speaking to tens of thousands at a time. The newspapers printed his sermons, and his campaigns were often front-page news. Billy Sunday reached all classes of people with the gospel message. He spoke to university students, businessman, socialists, intellectuals, the poor, the rich, and those in between. When he preached to thousands in a city, the tone of the whole city changed. Thieves with new hearts became honest working men, and formally dishonest politicians became crusaders for public decency. Because of Billy Sunday and the power of the gospel, many American cities became morally cleaner, safer, and more pleasant places in which to live. Because of his hard preaching against liquor, particularly his famous "booze" sermon, many saloons lost business and had to close down. For 20 years, Homer Rodeheaver served as Billy Sunday's music director in the revival campaigns.

Too Lazy to Study

There are few people who make no pretensions of understanding the Bible; for the simple reason that they are too lazy to study it. And if you want to understand the divine problem as it unfolds itself from the divine mind, you have to study, for God put no premium on laziness.

But, thank God, the only truth you need to know to keep you out of Heaven is summed up in John 3:16

Some people believe that though there is a God, we can know nothing about that God; that God never reveals himself to us. They swell up and call themselves agnostics. They say they don't believe "what I can't understand." Then you are a fool. If you only believe what you can understand, you will be dumbfounded to discover how little you really know.